

LOUD *and* CLEAR

For friends of Sense Scotland Autumn 2021



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Tel: 0300 330 9292
fundraising@sensescotland.org.uk

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Head Office:
Sense Scotland
TouchBase Glasgow
43 Middlesex Street
Glasgow, G41 1EE.



On the cover:

*Jack and Kirsty get the giggles.
Full story on **page 10**.*

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Welcome back

Autumn 2021 is upon us and, slowly but surely, we are able to come together once again in person.

Sense Scotland staff have begun a gradual return to their offices; TouchBases in Ayrshire, Lanarkshire and Glasgow are buzzing with the sounds of people we support having fun and reconnecting with their friends; our Short Breaks services are busy; people are out and about in their local communities — some have even managed holidays — and the Glasgow allotment has been carefully nurtured back to life.

It feels like we have finally turned a corner.

Like everyone else, we've missed being together and we're hoping to make up for lost time, with a mix of virtual and live activities planned over the next few months.

In this issue of **LOUD and CLEAR**, we celebrate some of the amazing people who make Sense Scotland the wonderful family it is – from people we support and their families, to staff, volunteers and supporters – people just like you. The range of skills, knowledge and abilities is extraordinary, but what we have in common is the language we all speak – that of care, kindness and consideration – however that is expressed.

Your donations make all this possible. Thank you for caring, thank you for your kindness and thank you for your continuing support of Sense Scotland.

Our Christmas catalogue is enclosed. Every purchase helps support people with communication support needs, as well as sustaining small businesses.

More products can be found online:
www.sensescotland.org.uk



Introducing ...

Richard

is the artist who created our special edition Christmas card. Richard is blind, has limited vocalisation and relies on body movements to communicate. The inspiration behind his design was to show the importance of the use of his hands – particularly for meal and bed times. Richard is supported to live independently, and his home is full of beautiful pictures he has created over many years. He loves cars, holidays and hot tubs. Richard is full of smiles and will let out a big positive “YAY” to let everyone know he is happy. His smile is contagious and he is a dream to support.



Eilidh

is a free-wheeling pocket rocket of fun. She lives life to the full, despite physical disabilities, sight difficulties and being profoundly deaf. You always know when Eilidh is around – you usually hear her before you see her. As a volunteer in the fundraising office, she takes her responsibilities very seriously – she is always punctual to arrive – and to leave. Eilidh lives independently with the support of Sense Scotland and is an enthusiastic participant in all social events as well as art, music and drama.



Matilda

is 10-years-old and lives in Malawi. Because she is deaf, her family and community did not believe that she could learn, and so she was hidden at home, resigned to a childhood of tending animals and looking after younger siblings whilst her parents worked in the fields or sold goods at market. But now, thanks to inclusive education training workshops delivered by our Sense Scotland partners, with support and encouragement from the people around her, Matilda is not just attending, but thriving at school.



Matilda (left) and best friend Anna

The Head Teacher of Matilda's school admitted:

"I used to ignore enrolling learners with disabilities, but I am a changed person as a result of the training, thus the reason I welcomed Matilda."

Her best friend Anna is delighted:

"Matilda is my best friend from home and when I saw her joining school, it pleased me that I now have my best friend in school to learn with, play with and go home together".



2022 Calendar



Meet the calendar girls ... *and boy!*

This year we have produced a very special calendar featuring artwork by Sense Scotland artists. Twelve people we support in our TouchBase Glasgow Groups Service worked collaboratively to create images which reflect their favourite activities, linked to months of the year.

Our artists have various communication support needs, including hearing, verbal and sight impairments. Makaton, PECS®, iPads, speech and touch were used to support each individual to fully understand the project and express their ideas. The original artwork is highly tactile, using a variety of materials and techniques including paint, print, stamping and découpage.



Alison is a champion domino player. Although she requires support to focus, which is achieved through eye contact, verbal communication and Makaton, once focused she is a formidable opponent. As her birthday is in December, it seemed only right that dominos are December's featured favourite activity.

Danielle loves trying something new and so was excited to work as part of a team to create a few of the images for the months in the calendar. Her biggest contribution was making sure the leaves for the month of November were cut to precision.



Jamie has a very vivid imagination and excels at creative writing and storytelling. He decided to use paragraphs of text from his writing to create a literary collage for the month of October.

Theresa has achieved ASDAN qualifications for various arts and crafts activities she has participated in. Having a defined project to focus her attention on resulted in the creation of Summer Skittles, August's calendar image.



Meet some of our staff

Gayle

is one of our Art Tutors and is a Master Printmaker by trade. She has an MA in Fine Arts and has been teaching art for more than 30 years.

Gayle explains: *"I support people to be creative, but it's not so easy to say 'today we're going to paint a picture' as not everyone will have that ability. However, a person who is blind might choose to paint and I will encourage them and ask them what colours they want to use. Or they may want to focus on a more sensory experience – using clay or other tactile materials to create something or express how they are feeling. Choice is very important. It's also essential that I watch for subtle and not so subtle verbal and non-verbal communication signs to really tune in to their interests and needs."*

Gayle is currently working with small groups at our Bellahouston allotment in Glasgow where sensory stimulation is an important part of the artistic experience:

"The allotment is our secret garden. It's very calming and nurturing. You become very aware of all your senses – the smell of flowers, air on your skin, the texture of plants, the sound of birds. And we enjoy the simple novelty of drinking a cup of tea outside!"



Gillian

is one of our Early Years Advisors. She has worked at Sense Scotland for more than 10 years and was previously a Registered Nursery Manager.

Gillian explains why the early years of a disabled child's life are so important:

"It is crucial that families get the right support as soon as possible. They are often overwhelmed with appointments, specialist equipment and medication. It can be difficult to find the time to address the vital communication and nurture needs of the child, which can be developed through play."

One of Gillian's favourite examples is of a family she supported, whose two sons both had communication support needs. By introducing play using electric fans, the brothers got the wind in their hair and the sensory feedback they were looking for. It has now become a treasured family tradition, where the whole extended family take part in a fun and inclusive sensory activity on Christmas Day.

"It's a privilege to be invited into a family's home and give them both advice and practical help to improve their situation."



Patrick

A music tutor with our Arts team, Patrick started as a volunteer in 2013 whilst studying for his BSc (Hons) in Music Technology. From a young age, Patrick played numerous instruments including piano, guitar, trombone and percussion.

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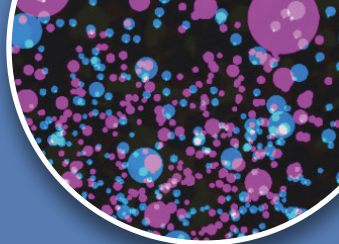
Patrick explains how music can be created and enjoyed by people with communication support needs:

"Music is a common language we all share. No matter the barriers – ability, mobility or understanding - we can have a conversation through music. The nodding of a head, clap of a hand, tells me the person is feeling and reacting to the music and to me."

f I beat on a floor drum, its low frequency creates a bigger sound which can be felt as a physical vibration rather than perception through the ear. A deaf person can also absorb those frequencies through sensitive bones at the base of their skull.

"Linking this with technology, as we do through our Sensatronic Lab programme, you can see the beat as well as feel it. We adapt microphones to send signals to a computer, creating visual feedback responses to individuals' sound-making. And so, people we support can see lights and effects resulting from their actions and music making, developing sensory integration and self-expression – through an instrument, their voice or body movements."

"Music is the magic that helps people reflect how they are feeling and can ease the sense of frustration they might feel at not being able to communicate with everyone. It blows my mind every day that this is my job. I love it."



Meet Kirsty and Amy

When pupils at Boclair Academy were invited to take part in the Youth Philanthropy Initiative (YPI), Kirsty Muir knew exactly which charity she was going to champion – Sense Scotland.

"My cousin Jack absolutely loves coming to TouchBase Glasgow. He really enjoys using the sensory room, and if we won the £3000, we knew it would be used to make improvements to it."

Kirsty and friend Amy Davidson teamed up to pitch to a panel of judges - featuring a video of cousin Jack. Their passionate and polished performance saw Sense Scotland awarded the prize.

Amy said, *"The experience has inspired us. Raising money is another aspect of volunteering and it's not just rewarding for the charity, but also for us."*

Thank you so much – future philanthropists in the making!



Fundraising News

Kiltwalk

Due to Coronavirus, all live Kiltwalk events were unable to go ahead earlier in the year. However, this did not stop 21 dedicated Sense Scotland supporters who walked hundreds of miles, and raised more than **£12,600** for the Virtual Kiltwalk.



Skydive

Our first in-person fundraising event of 2021 saw more than 20 thrill-seekers sign up to take part in tandem skydives at Errol and Auchterarder airfields. By choosing to throw themselves 10,000 feet out of a plane they not only met their ambition to know what it feels like to fly, but also raised over **£12,000** in the process.



Paws for Sense Scotland

A big thank you to The Daft Doodle Co., our partner for this year's Paws for Sense Scotland event. This partnership saw our participants get their hands on some amazing goodies for their fundraising efforts. Just look at this beautiful 'pawtrait'!



Online Auction

Our Online Auction is returning this year and will run throughout November. A perfect opportunity to bid for artwork, sporting memorabilia and experiences which will make truly wonderful Christmas presents in addition to supporting our charitable work.

For more info see **www.sensescotland.org.uk**.



Save the date ...

Christmas Concert - Thursday 16th December

Join us for a very special online celebration of Christmas. Featuring home grown talent from our services, as well as special celebrity guests, this joyous video-stream is guaranteed to lift your spirits.



Take a stroll in the 'Garden of Evan'

Evan Louis Schwarz lived a short life but left an incredible legacy. Here is Evan's story, as told by mum Elise:

Evan suffered a massive seizure when he was almost six-months-old. The effect was devastating. Evan spent a month in intensive care on a ventilator deeply comatose, and the next 19 months in hospital before I was allowed to bring him home.

"Evan received wonderful medical care, but the most significant impact as far as I could see was the contribution from Sense Scotland. Evan's days were filled with music, art, and trips to the sensory room at TouchBase Glasgow."

"Sadly, Evan passed away in February 2014 at the age of two-and-a-half."

"Although my love for Evan has never faded, the pain of losing him always seemed to stop me being able to celebrate his life in any public way. On his seventh anniversary I woke up feeling unusually angry. But in a strange way it felt that my overwhelming sadness had somehow stepped aside to allow me to experience an emotion that I could put to good use instead."

"And so I set up the Garden of Evan Charity and we produced its namesake sensory storybook."

"I have gifted copies of 'Garden of Evan' to Sense Scotland. All proceeds from sales via their online shop will be a direct donation as thanks for all their wonderful support of Evan and children like him.

Elise



'Garden of Evan' is available from our website: www.sensescotland.org.uk

What is a Sensory Story Book?

In addition to words and pictures, a sensory story introduces physical stimuli to the learning experience. This allows us to focus on each sense as we experience it, in a playful environment. In the 'Garden of Evan', we highlight each of the senses using scarves, bags of smelly stuff, pebbles from the beach, a water spray bottle, hugs and cuddles and extra-specially tactile "snowdrip embraces"!